

The Freeman House
61 South Valley Road
West Orange, Essex County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-651

HABS
N.J.

7-ORAW.

3-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

The Freeman House
61 South Valley Road
West Orange, Essex County, New Jersey

Owners: (and occupants) Mr. and Mrs. Donald Craig

Date of Erection: About 1820

Architect: Unknown

Builders: Linas Freeman (1763-1830) and Cyrus
Freeman (d. 1839)

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two and one-half, garret and
cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry (coursed ashlar
brownstone above grade)

Exterior walls - timber frame, clapboarded

Interior walls - lath and plaster on studding

Chimneys - brick, built into inside of gable
end walls

Roof - gable (The bracketted raking cornice
at gable ends and the gable over center
of front are not original). Slate roof-
ing laid over older wood shingles.

Historical Data:

The identification of this house by discovery
of the name of its original and successive owners is
found possible by examination of the structure and by
searches in the County records, reported as follows:

Samuel³ Freeman, the original owner of this
farm, was born in Newark Township in 1696(a) and died

(a) Samuel³ Freeman, 1696-1782, son of Samuel² Freeman
and his wife Elizabeth who d. 13 Nov. 1732 ae. 70 (b),
grandson of Stephen Freeman of Milford, Conn. 1640 and
of Newark, N.J. 1666 where he d. 1675. See Henry
Whittemore, The Founders and Builders of the Oranges,
1896, pp. 67-68.

21 October 1782 aged 86 years (b). In 1728, it is said (a), that this Samuel Freeman purchased from Josiah Ogden 40 acres described as beginning at John Freeman's south corner tree standing by Rahway River, thence to Lidington's Brook and up the said brook to the head thereof, thence to the mountain, thence along the mountain to the line marked out between Joseph Hedden and the said land, thence southeast to Rahway River and thence down the said river to the place of beginning", the consideration money being 69 Pounds.

Samuel Freeman abovenamed (or his father of same name) was one of the grantees named in the deed of 1719 conveying 20 acres of the Mountain Society (Congregational, now First Presbyterian Church of Orange) for a parsonage farm. He was elected Deacon of the church in 1748, served in that office until his death, and as such he with others made the contract with Moses Baldwin in 1754 to erect the building for the church (a).

In his will (c) dated 18 March 1775, Samuel Freeman Senr., abovesaid, devised to his son Samuel Freeman the tract on which the latter then lived and 30 acres of the mountain lot bought of Jonathan Crane "at the west end of my salt meadow at Oyster

(b) Inscriptions from gravestones in Presbyterian Burial Ground, cor. Main St. and Scotland Rd., in the present city of Orange. (W. H. Shaw, History of Essex and Hudson Counties, publ. 1884, pp. 362 and 776).

(c) This will does not appear in the probate records of the Surrogate nor in those now deposited with the Sec'y. of State. The abstract above is taken from a copy of the will, which copy was made by W. B. Smith, Atty., late of Orange, now dec'd. Book A, p. 324 of the Orphans' Court records contain this reference to the failure of Abel Freeman the executor to offer the will for probate:- (quote) 11 July 1803. Joseph Tompkins vs. Cyrus Freeman and Joseph Harrison execrs. of Abel Freeman dec'd. who was execr. of Samuel Freeman, dec'd. on citation to prove the will of the said Samuel Freeman, dec'd., returned cited as to Cyrus Freeman, who accordingly produced the will.

Creek; to his son Thomas Freeman the tract on which the son then lived and 20 acres on the mountain in his Crane lot between those assigned to sons Timothy and Abel, and one-third of his meadow on Morresses Brook, "having considered the sercomstances of your farms, I so thoat fit to divide it, and of the mountain lot and good meadow divide it equal among you all..... I give unto my son Abel Freeman in land my homestead where we live and 25 acres on the mountain in the Crane lot next to your brother Samuel, and a third part of my (meadow by) Morresses Creek (illegible) Timothy", and appointed Abel as his executor. To his daughter Martha Smith he devised one-half his household goods and to his grandchildren, Matthias, Phebe, Martha, Samuel, Elizabeth, Timothy, Phebe, Abel, Rhoda, Eunice, Thomas, Hannah and Martha the other half thereof, and concluded the testament with these words - - "I desire you my dear children to (do) all in love and peace that so the God of all peace may bless you".

Abel⁴ Freeman, named as a son and as devisee of the homestead "where we live", in the will of Samuel Freeman above cited, was born in 1725 and died 30 April 1803 aged 78 years^(b). By his will dated 26 February 1785 and proved in 1803, he devised to his wife (not by name) a third part of all his real and personal estate during her widowhood, and 7 pounds thereof to his daughter Lydia. One other third of his movable estate he devised to his sons Cyrus and Linus equally, and the remaining third thereof and one-quarter of his lands divided between his daughters Rhoda, Eunice and Lydia, and the three other quarters of his lands divided equally between the two sons. The executors appointed were his wife and son Cyrus and Joseph Harrison. These two sons evidently erected a new home, the one here surveyed, about 1820. The existence of the earlier homestead devised to their father in 1775 as abovesaid has not been investigated by this survey.

Linus⁵ Freeman, a son and devisee of Abel Freeman as abovesaid, died 13 October 1830, aged 67 years^(b) evidently without issue. By his will dated

4 July 1830 (proved 25 October following), he devised legacies to the children of his deceased sister Rhoda Harrison and to his sisters Eunice, Pierson and Lydia Freeman. To his brother Cyrus Freeman he devised the balance of his estate both real and personal, and appointed him co-executor with Nathan Squier.

Having previously, by quitclaim deed of 7 July 1803 from his sisters added their one-quarter interest in the homestead to his three-eighths as devised respectively to them by their father's will cited above, Cyrus Freeman thus came into full possession as devisee of his brother Linus Freeman's remaining three-eighths share.

This Cyrus⁵ Freeman, by his will dated 28 July 1837 (proved 30 December 1839) devised part of certain lands to his son Rufus, he to pay \$800 to his brother Jotham, and 6 acres on Scotland Road to his grandchildren, Cyrus F. Ward and George S. Ward (children of Bethuel and Rhoda Ward); to his daughter Lydia Freeman 12 acres on each side of the Morris and Essex Railroad and "also during her natural life the use of the northeast front room and adjoining bedroom on the first floor of the dwelling house where I now live". To his son Gershom he devised 10 acres purchased from Timothy Freeman, 27 acres on the mountain and all personal property. To his daughter Martha, wife of Ethan M. Baldwin, he devised 6 acres, and to his grandchildren Edward and George C. Freeman the homestead and all the residue of the estate; reserving to their father Gershom Freeman the use thereof during his lifetime. The executors named were the said son Gershom Freeman and son-in-law Bethuel Ward.

Edward⁷ Freeman abovenamed devisee, being likewise of Orange Township* at the date of his will, 26 November 1861 (proved 4 January 1862) devised to

*Until 1782, this part of Newark Twp. was known as the Mountain Society settlements, and in 1806 it was set off as Orange Twp. In 1862 West Orange Twp. was created from parts of Orange, Caldwell and Livingston.

his said brother George C. Freeman "All right, title and claim to that undivided real estate left us by the will of our grandfather Cyrus Freeman subject to the life right of my father Garshom Freeman and known as the Homestead"; also all personal property including the business of Freeman and Hughes, "for the purpose of restoring the property left us by our grandfather in the branch of the family he intended. George⁷ C. Freeman who thus came into full possession of the ancestral farm, opened it for real estate development. By a deed of 19 January 1910, he conveyed in trust to Cyrus G. Freeman and Hermon M. Freeman, all the parties being described as of West Orange Township, five tracts of land, the second of which contained the house itself, being a lot on the northwest side of South Valley Road between Orange Heights Avenue and Walker Road, extending back some 400 feet to a rear frontage of some 670 feet on Oxford Terrace.

On September 1st, 1921, the two trustees abovenamed, George C. Freeman being deceased, deeded to Donald Craig and wife, of East Orange, a lot 125 feet wide and 235 feet deep, in the northeast corner of the larger tract last described above, and on which lot stands the ancestral homestead here considered. Mr. and Mrs. Craig remain as owners and occupants at the date of our survey of the house in April 1940.

Bibliography:

Report on searching of title in Land
and Probate records of Essex County
by Thomas J. Riley, abstractor, 19
June 1940

Laura D. Cook
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer